

CONFIDENTIAL

REPORT

MUSLIM MEETING - SEPTEMBER 8, 1959

On Sunday, September 6, 1959, I attended the public meeting of the Muslims at the Mosque Theatre, 1020 Broad Street, Newark, N. J. This meeting was advertised for several weeks prior to September 6 through posters, cards, flyers, pamphlets and the distribution of free tickets. The principal speaker was, Elijah Muhammed, called the Messenger and national leader of the Muslim movement.

I arrived at the Mosque about 11:30 A.M., a half hour before the scheduled starting time of the meeting. There were about 150 persons milling around in front of the building, a great number of whom were the Muslim members of what seemed to be a "security guard" and those selling literature. (I understand that this security guard is known as the Fruit of Islam). The crowd was orderly and quiet and responded to the commands ("do not block the sidewalk", "maintain a double line") of the guards very readily. There were six uniformed policemen stationed outside the Mosque. Except for directing traffic they were not needed to maintain order during the time that I was on the outside of the building.

Among the cars which were arriving I saw many from New York, several from D. C., Mass. and Penna. Judging by their regalia, particularly the women, about half of the arrivals were members of the movement.

Shortly after 12 noon the doors were opened and about 30 persons were admitted at a time, women to the left, men to the right. Each male (and also females, I understand) was directed to a line of the members of the "security force" and told to "empty everything in your pockets". Each person was searched and patted down by one of the men quite thoroughly, in fact each search took about 3 minutes. I saw that several men objected to the search. They were told firmly but politely, "we are searching for weapons, this is part of our ritual". After this ritual the line was directed through another cordon of followers with a word "checked". We were ushered to the orchestra section.

There was a press section set up in the first few rows of the right orchestra section. I saw Mr. Steve Duncan and Mr. Russ Carter of the N. J. Afro-American newspaper with whom I chatted briefly before the start of the meeting. The rows immediately behind the press section appeared to be a special guest section. Some of the people seated here probably belonged to other or perhaps related religious cults judging by their dress.

One other observation was the posting of the security guard at every door and exit, including those in the upper mezzanine and balcony where there was no one sitting. I read and was told that these extreme security measures are taken at each meeting because of alleged threats and attempts on the life of Elijah Muhammed.

At 1 P.M. the meeting was opened by Minister James 3X, who is the leader of Temple No. 25, the Newark branch of the Muslims. He introduced Minister Wallace X, the Phila. leader who recited the Muslim prayer with audience participation.

Minister James 3X then set the tone of the meeting with such statements as, "we have come to hear the Moses of the so-called Negro", "we have problems, we shall hear the man with the solutions", "we did not come here to break any city laws" (this is the only reference to anything local that I heard).

He introduced another Newark leader Dr. Leo McCollum, Newark dentist who extolled Muhammed, spoke of his personal conversion to the movement and blasted Negro business and professional men for being more concerned with financial and material gains than business training and development.

The next speaker was Lucius X, the minister from Washington, D. C. He continued in the same vein, arousing the audience with his statements about the new world which is coming, the truth and words of praise for Elijah Muhammed. During his speech Muhammed entered the theatre accompanied by three young girls and a host of the guards.

This speaker was followed by Minister Malcom X who is the New York leader. He focused his talk on his trip through the Middle East and the spread and acceptance of Muslims in this area. Malcom X cited several personal experiences and made statements like: Christians enslave you, Muslims elevate and whites respect Muslims in the Middle East. He then presented Elijah Muhammed.

The Messenger began what amounted to a series of miscellaneous, disorganized statements which were supposed to be his teachings and solutions to the problems of the "so-called" Negroes" in the wilderness of North America" (a phrase used repeatedly by each speaker). Because of the illogical progression of his speech, Elijah was difficult to follow but I did recall some of his statements, samples of which follow.

Muhammed made frequent references to 20 million Negroes in the U. S. and often alluded to himself as the Moses of the black people with the charge to lead them from the bonds of slavery. He spoke of the end of the world rule of the white man.

On opposition to his movement he stated, "Father Divine gets away with calling himself God and here I can't even be called a Messenger without being criticized." Also, "they killed Jesus and he was teaching good." I am just teaching the truth. (Perhaps this accounts for the extreme security measures which surround the Messenger.)

At this point Elijah Muhammed interrupted his speech to introduce the three young ladies who were sitting on the stage with him and about 20 of the ministers. Each had an opportunity to address the audience.

About the same time as the first young lady rose to speak one of the guards who had been walking up and down the aisle came to me and asked, "Are you a member of the Press?", to which I replied, "No, I am not". He then said, "please refrain from writing, you may ask any question you want at the end of the lesson". I then stopped taking notes.

The first young lady articulately and forcefully urged people to turn from Christianity to the Muslim movement and to recognize the importance and power of the teachings of Elijah Muhammed. She also described the Moslem Girls Training (MGT) and General Civilization Classes (GCC) which are a part of the program of training in home economics and family care.

The second young lady, who was introduced as coming from one of the leading families of Chicago, spoke on her conversion to the movement. She too spoke against Christianity and urged support of the Muslims. She also mentioned the elaborate plans for a 20 million dollar Islamic Center in Chicago. An appeal was made for funds to support this project. At this point, 3:15 P.M., I left the meeting.

It should be noted that throughout all the speeches there was frequent applause, cheers and vocal assent.

Outside the Mosque I became engaged in a conversation with two policemen and a reporter from the Jersey City Journal. He told me how he was refused admittance to the meeting because he is white. In fact he stated that Mr. Ray Brown, an attorney from Jersey City, with whom he came, experienced some difficulty in entering the Mosque since he is a light-skinned Negro.

As I was leaving there were still some people entering the building. At the height of the meeting I estimated the audience to be about 1500 - 2000 persons, the majority of whom were young people, 20 - 30 years old.

This report is supplemented by a copy of the article on the meeting which appeared in the N. J. Afro-American, September 12, 1959.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter D. Chambers

Walter D. Chambers, Ass't Director
Mayor's Commission on Group Relations

NEW JERSEY AMERICAN

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He who enters must go through ritual

NEWARK "You've got to go through the ritual, brother."

The ritual, as an AFRO writer about to enter the Mosque Theatre to cover the Elijah Muhammed rally, learned Sunday, was one of the most thorough frisking jobs to be found anywhere this side of a nudist colony.

At the entrance to the right of the Mosque auditorium polite but firm followers of Mr. Muhammed went about checking out all of the men who entered.

No one demanded that you go through the "ritual" but there was the feeling that this was the necessary prerequisite for entry.

The ladies entering the left side of the auditorium were given their "ritual" treatment by followers attired in flowing white garb.

APPROXIMATELY 2,000 persons, many of them out-of-town, attended Mr. Muhammed's first appearance in Newark since his controversial movement was treated on television and in a widely circulated magazine.

Scheduled to open at noon, the meeting started shortly after 1 p.m. with remarks by James X, minister of Newark Temple No. 25.

"Brothers and sisters, please go along with the city laws," cautioned the host minister at one point. "We did not come here to break laws."

FOLLOWING A pattern brought to light during a recent New York rally, the Elijah Muhammed meeting barred white persons.

A fair East Orange colored man, Morris Perkins of 223 S. Clinton St., protested that he was not permitted to enter the auditorium.

Mr. Muhammed, the messenger, arrived at the rally at 2 p.m. and was presented by the host minister.

"I don't say that I'm here to preach against white people," declared Mr. Muhammed. "I'm not here to preach against anyone. I'm here to tell the truth."

DURING HIS discussion, Mr. Muhammed denounced Christianity as "that spooky religion," called white men devils and advocated rigid segregation between colored and white persons.

"You will never get freedom and justice from your former slave masters," he told his audience.

Turning his attention to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Mr. Muhammed stated:

"I do think the Moslems and the NAACP have the same goal, in a way. We don't say that we are against the NAACP. We are with them."

He expressed his objection to white members of the NAACP in this fashion:

"The only thing we're against is your head. You don't have the head that belongs to the body. A white head does not belong to a black body."

MR. MUHAMMED was also critical of persons who have spoken out against his movement recently.

"You never called me a hate teacher until the white man called me one," he asserted.

Slapping at housing discrimination, the speaker cited the biblical commandment, "Love thy neighbor," adding: "If you were their neighbor they would allow you to live anywhere in the city."

Dr. Leo P. McCallum, Newark dentist, described Mr. Muhammed as a man "who has come to raise us from the muck and mire."